

NEVADA STATE WELFARE BOARD MINUTES

The meeting of the Nevada State Welfare Board was brought to order by Carolyn Wilson at 10:03 a.m. on Thursday, February 26, 2004, at the Welfare Division Flamingo District Office, 3330 East Flamingo, Suite #55, Las Vegas, Nevada.

ATTENDANCE OF BOARD MEMBERS:

Gloria Banks-Weddle
Sherrie Coy
Kari Demetras
Mary Eldridge
Carolyn Wilson
Yvette Zmaila

ABSENT BOARD MEMBERS:

Kay Zunino

ATTENDANCE OF DIVISION STAFF:

Nancy Kathryn Ford, Administrator
Gary Stagliano, Deputy Administrator, Program & Field Operations
Roger Mowbray, Deputy Administrator, Administrative Services
Leslie Danihel, Chief, Eligibility & Payments
Leland Sullivan, Chief, Child Support Enforcement
Tami Dufrense, Research & Statistics Coordinator
Jerry Allen, Chief, Child Care
Charlotte Wortman, Chief, Employment & Support Services
Sandee Wyand, Field Services Manager
Liliam Shell, Charleston Office Manager
Rachelle Church, Henderson Office Manager
Joe Garcia, Flamingo Office Manager
Jenelle Gimlin, Child Support Program Specialist
Cindy Pyzel, Deputy Attorney General
Louise Bush, Staff Specialist
Lynette Giles, Executive Assistant

GUESTS:

Willa Chaney, Smart Start
Connie Harris, Kid's Turf
Kay Manard, Henderson Allied Community Advocates
Reverend Chester Richardson, Southern Nevada Workforce Investment Board and
Economic Opportunity Board Member

A. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 6, 2003 MINUTES:

Gloria Banks-Weddle moved to approve the minutes as written, Mary Eldridge seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

B. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Nancy Ford welcomed the Board to the newest Welfare Division office, the Flaming District Office. A tour may be conducted during a break or at the end of the meeting, time permitting. She commented this office is going to be a model for all future Welfare offices.

Currently there are 1,182 positions in the Welfare Division. 94.5 positions have been filled since November 2003. 80% of the positions filled were in the district offices. There are currently five Social Worker vacancies. Ms. Ford reminded the Board new front-line workers are required to attend the new worker academy and explained what a front-line worker academy entails. A presentation must be made at the next Interim Finance Committee (IFC) meeting about how the new workers are impacting the caseload processing timeframes. Ms. Banks-Weddle asked the percentage of positions hired in Clark County. Sandee Wyand responded the majority of the front-line positions were hired in Clark County with about 15 positions hired in the north. Most of the positions hired are Family Service Specialists (FSS) and it takes approximately four months for each academy to graduate. The current class is the 15th to graduate from the academy. A discussion ensued about the number of employee turnovers, why there is such a high turnover rate in the Welfare Division and how recruitments for FSS positions are done. Ms. Ford introduced the office managers in attendance: Joe Garcia; Rachelle Church; and, Liliam Shell.

C. REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP ITEMS FROM LAST MEETING:

Louise Bush reported there were no formal recommendations made at the November 6, 2003 meeting. There were 203 meeting notices mailed, postings were done in compliance with the Open Meeting Law and the agenda is posted on the division's web-site.

Two public hearings were held on November 13, 2003. Regulations adopted included holding IRS tax intercepts filed jointly for child support for 6 months before distribution to the non-custodial parent; removing references to court-appointed relative guardians when considering income in certain cases; reducing the gross countable income for the Family Preservation Program (FPP) from 500% of the federal poverty level to 200%; removing the Division of Health Care

Financing and Policy (DHCFP) from the eligibility determination process; requiring an additional assessment regarding the capability of an individual deemed ill or incapacitated by a doctor; requiring child care clients to pursue child support as a condition of eligibility; stipulating an Assistance with Child Care for the Employed (ACE) recipient must have been terminated from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance due to excess earnings; and, requiring a household reapplying for TANF benefits to comply with the New Employees of Nevada (NEON) Program prior to approval for TANF benefits, which was dropped from the agenda. The second public hearing held on November 13, 2003 included changes to the Child Care State Plan and Policy Manual requiring applicants related to a child in Child Protective Services (CPS) or in foster care to meet the income guidelines set forth in manual and are subject to the 5% co-payment; and, changing the payment schedule to providers to pay the least expensive weekly rate for a child in care for four or more days per week, this amendment was tabled pending further discussion at a Child Care Workshop.

The Child Care Workshop was held December 19th. Ms. Bush explained there were open discussions with providers in both the north and south. The information received gave staff insight to problems faced by providers. It was agreed a survey would be sent to providers statewide for their input. Adoption of the rate schedule was tabled until after all provider surveys have been received.

Ms. Bush said another public hearing was held on February 4, 2004. Policies adopted included distribution of child support withholding fees to the counties; an amendment to the TANF State Plan to increase the gross countable income limit for the Family Preservation Program from 200% of the federal poverty level to 300%, per Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) who administers the program; and the Child Care policy payment schedule to providers to pay the least expensive weekly rate for a child in care for four or more days per week was dropped.

The Child Care Workshop and Child Care agenda items were dropped from the February 18, 2004 public hearing. Ms. Bush explained the newborn Medicaid policy adopted at this hearing.

There is a March 26th public hearing scheduled on Child Care and a TANF policy change. She explained the policies to be heard at the March 26th hearing and stated the agenda and exhibits are also available on the division's web-site.

D. CASELOAD STATISTICS REPORT:

Tami Dufresne explained she will be reviewing the Welfare Reform Quarterly Report and two separate handouts; an overview of her presentation and the most

current statistics on the four main welfare caseloads (TANF-cash, TANF-medical, Food Stamps and Medicaid Eligibles). She reviewed the 'mountain chart' showing TANF caseload changes. Ms. Banks-Weddle asked if the TANF-medical category is a reflection of those who have surpassed their time limit or those who are under-insured. Ms. Dufresne replied this category is more representative of those who choose not to receive cash grants or not to cooperate with work requirements and opt for TANF-medical only. Ms. Ford explained TANF-medical is a requirement of the Medicaid State Plan and if someone is eligible under the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) rules, they are eligible for TANF-related Medicaid. They can even get Medicaid if they do not cooperate with other programs and may also be eligible for Food Stamps.

Ms. Dufresne continued, reviewing page 14, graph one, which shows the major events occurring in TANF contributing toward Welfare Reform efforts. March 2000 was the lowest point in TANF enrollment. Caseloads began to rise in 2001 and there has been a steady decline since the high point after September 2001. The TANF caseload drop can be attributed to internal business changes to encourage applicants to find a job and not collect TANF. Ms. Banks-Weddle asked if the unemployment rate includes those getting Unemployment Insurance checks and those not getting one. Ms. Dufresne replied the unemployment rate does not include those not getting unemployment benefits or those who have given up looking for a job, so the rates are somewhat skewed.

The Welfare Division's budget is running about 14% under the legislatively approved budget, which will save the state money. Page 17, graph four, was discussed, which gives a TANF population visual such as single parent population, the largest; two-parent populations; and, five groups of child-only populations. Ms. Dufresne explained the child-only populations are the fastest growing populations in TANF budgets not only in Nevada, but throughout the nation. Page 19, graph six, illustrates growth in the TANF-medical category and the caseload is at a historic high in this category. Ms. Banks-Weddle asked what percentage of the increase is those who are illegally in the country, Ms. Dufresne said she can give this percentage for the TANF cash category, but not for TANF-medical without more research. Ms. Danihel explained many of the children eligible for Medicaid benefits may be children of legal non-citizens because TANF cash assistance has such stringent rules and they can only qualify for Medicaid. A discussion ensued regarding what programs are available to undocumented non-citizens. The TANF-related Medicaid caseload is expected to continue to grow because when TANF Reauthorization passes Congress the bill will include more stringent work requirements, people may not want to comply and may opt for Medicaid only. Ms. Dufresne explained there are 173,233 Medicaid eligible people in Nevada and reviewed the different Medicaid populations. Ms. Zmaila asked if there are any states using Medicaid funding to match for an insurance plan for working low-income families. Ms. Danihel explained some states have applied for Health Insurance Flexibility and

Accountability (HIFA) waiver. One of the available provisions of the waiver is to use Medicaid funding to buy into insurance programs and allow employees to pay a co-payment to get insurance. A Legislative Sub-Committee has been created to explore the potential of Nevada applying for the HIFA waiver and a study is due to be complete in June 2004 for a recommendation to the 2005 Legislature. A discussion ensued about the possibilities of Nevada receiving a HIFA waiver and the Nevada Check-Up Program.

Ms. Dufresne explained there is growth in every Medicaid category and reviewed page 20, graph 7. Page 23, graph 10, shows the amount of time recipients are on TANF cash, TANF-related Medicaid and CHAP. Ms. Dufresne explained this information is only about 18 months old and does not include information from the old Legacy computer system. Page 32, graph 17, shows Nevada's unemployment rate and she briefly reviewed the information.

Ms. Dufresne noted staff is working on the projections which will be used to build the 2006 - 2007 biennium budget. Mr. Mowbray will be giving a presentation about budget building later in the meeting. Application statistics, which show what front-line workers are handling, are being finalized to give an accurate view of the total number of applications received.

The Child Support Enforcement Program has added six (6) new indicators to the Welfare Reform Quarterly Packet. This information is on pages 34 - 39. Indicators covered are the total caseload; TANF funds collected; IRS collections; Unemployment Insurance Benefit collections; recovery collections; and, total Child Support collections. The data for these reports can be found in the front of the packet.

NOTE: Ms. Zmaila arrived at the meeting during the Caseload discussion and the gavel was passed.

E.1. COMPLIANCE WITH E&T CONCILIATION PROCESS:

Charlotte Wortman introduced herself to the Board. She explained the old sanction policy requires applicants to work with Employment & Training to find a job to become self-sufficient. Many times there were those who did not cooperate with the program, but received no penalty; she gave examples of how non-cooperation worked. Now people are given 30 days to come in and talk to their worker about why they are not complying and what the problem is. Previously, the notices were ignored and after an additional 13 days, TANF grants were only cut by 1/3. It affected some, but others still didn't cooperate. If they continue not to cooperate, their TANF grant was cut another 1/3 until the grant was cut to \$0. If someone waited until the 3rd month to cooperate with the

program and cure the sanction, they could receive their TANF grant and go through the sanction process again.

The new sanction process began January 2004. The new policy only allows a 30-day conciliation timeframe. If the sanction is addressed and cured, it will be dropped. Anyone in non-compliance must come into their office to receive their TANF check for the month of sanction. This change has resulted in recipients coming in, meeting with their workers and curing sanctions.

In addition to the sanction policy, some business practices were changed. Pre-screening for new applicants by Employment & Training workers or Social Workers is now being done. Ms. Wortman stated the program rules, expectations and what needs to be done to receive TANF cash assistance is explained during the pre-screening period. Pre-screening is done first, before first meeting with an eligibility worker to discuss other resources available to assist them. After TANF is approved, recipients are then asked to work in a Welfare Office for 40 hours which allows them to complete the necessary paperwork, skills assessments, attend orientations and build a business relationship between the recipient and the agency. If they do not cooperate with the program requirements, the new sanction process comes into effect.

After the one time 30-day sanction is cured, and they fail to cooperate with the program again, a 10-day sanction notice is given, their TANF check is again sent to the office and another conference is done. Staff has had several recipients who do not pick up their checks at the office. The checks are then voided and the cases closed. Ms. Wortman believes the new conciliation process is working. She stated there is currently a 29% cooperation rate for cases in sanction status. The idea of the new sanction process is to emphasize there are only 24 months to become self-sufficient before their sit-out period.

Ms. Banks-Weddle asked if transportation is provided to those in the program. Ms. Wortman replied those in the metropolitan areas receive bus tokens and those in the rural areas receive assistance with vehicle repairs.

Ms. Zmaila asked if the screening process and skills assessment includes a literacy assessment, Ms. Wortman said they do, although literacy problems may not be found until later. If this type of problem is found, the participants are helped with literacy or any other problems they may have. Ms. Wortman then explained how the assessments are done and the type of tests used.

Ms. Wilson asked what percentage of applicants are non-compliant. Mr. Stagliano said test samples have been done at each office to determine the number of applicants in sanction. At the Owens District Office, 58 cases were non-compliant and 12 applicants opted out after the orientation and possibly took Medicaid assistance only. Mr. Stagliano explained the different things expected of clients if they opt to receive TANF cash assistance. A discussion ensued on

different recipient job readiness issues, how the Employment & Training staff help them get jobs, how the sanction process begins and the definition of self-sufficiency. In response to a question from Ms. Coy, Ms. Wortman said the assessments are given orally, if requested, and it is usually an indicator of a problem.

Reverend Chester Richardson, a member of the Southern Nevada Workforce Investment Board (SNWIB), says proper training is an important issue. The SNWIB had a working relationship with the Welfare-to-Work (WtW) Program at one time. He explained if someone signs up for the SNWIB programs, the applicant's skills are measured and follow-up is done by their SNWIB caseworker. While he was listening to Ms. Wortman's presentation, he feels a meeting with staff is warranted to address his concerns and to discuss how to best utilize SNWIB funds to assist welfare clients connect with good paying jobs. Ms. Banks-Weddle asked if any business associates, who were once on welfare assistance, are members of the SNWIB. Reverend Richardson explained over 50% of the SNWIB must be business members to assist with how the funds should be spent by law. He then explained there are several performance measures the SNWIB must meet and some of the different things that must take place before an applicant is able to interact with an employer through the SNWIB. He believes job placement services and job developers should be provided to the Welfare Division by the SNWIB as follow-up services are available to applicants for a longer period of time.

Ms. Zmaila stated she was on the SNWIB at its inception and was part of the initial group who first took in the grant and consequently, she has followed the SNWIBs activities. She asked Reverend Richardson if he is asking the Welfare Board to refer clients to the SNWIB and to define the relationship he would like to see the SNWIB have with the Welfare Division. Reverend Richardson said he would like to have the Welfare Division refer more clients to the SNWIB programs, although they would be unable to serve anyone ineligible for TANF. Sandee Wyand, Field Services Manager, commented offices in the Las Vegas area already give referrals to the SNWIB. Ms. Ford said staff have found when some clients are referred to the SNWIB, they are rejected because they do not have certain basic job skills. Reverend Richardson explained the SNWIB does not teach basic skills and cannot put people into training programs until other barriers are taken care of. In response to a question from Ms. Wortman, Reverend Richardson said the ideal model for leveraging services between the division and the SNWIB would be a dual enrollment between the two agencies to better prepare individuals for the workforce and allow them to secure long-term employment while making a livable wage. Ms. Wortman explained the two areas working closely together to reach the same goal is preferable to dual enrollment. Ms. Wyand stated staff work closely with Job Connect and other services provided by the SNWIB and while its not perfect, the division will continue to work closely with the SNWIB. A discussion ensued between the Board and Reverend Richardson regarding the procedures and programs offered by the SNWIB. After

the discussion Ms. Ford encouraged Reverend Richardson to work with Ms. Wyand to streamline the relationship between the Welfare Division and SNWIB. Ms. Zmaila also encouraged him to send any information to the Board he feels is pertinent.

E.2. ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE:

Ms. Wortman explained the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) has had several proven successes. The EAP was known as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEA) Program and was a part-time program because once the funding was exhausted, the program closed for that particular year. In 2001, the Legislature developed and passed the Universal Energy Charge (UEC) which shows up on your energy bill and the contributions to UEC are shared by the Weatherization and EAP programs. The funding is used by the Weatherization Program to weatherize homes in order to make them more energy-efficient and EAP uses the funding to help low-income families pay their energy bills. The UEC funding also moved the EAP from a part-time program to a full-time one. EAP benefits are paid directly to the utility companies on behalf of the applicant.

EAP has been successful due to state and contract staff working together to expand the program. A new computer program was developed to track eligibility for the EAP and has helped reduce application processing times from 16 weeks to under two (2) weeks. Mr. Stagliano explained there were 15,144 households served through the EAP in state fiscal year 2003 and while there is enough funding in the program, there are currently not enough applicants. Ms. Zmaila asked if the EAP funding could be coordinated with other assistance programs to provide energy assistance for those who cannot earn higher wages. Mr. Stagliano said this is one of the changes being made to the EAP and program information will be sent to the different programs partnering with the Welfare Division. A discussion ensued regarding the difference between the size of the TANF caseload versus the EAP caseload.

Mr. Stagliano explained outreach contractors have been hired to visit different community organizations statewide to give a better understanding of the program and distribute applications. A contract also being completed for approval by the Board of Examiners (BOE) for a marketing program to advertise the program. Ms. Banks-Weddle suggested advertising the program in some of the "free" newspapers in the area. Mr. Stagliano said he will bring up her suggestion, but cannot promise success because other attempts in newspaper advertising have failed. He also stated Sierra Pacific Power Company will give energy assistance information to those who are late paying their power bills.

E.3. CHILD CARE PROGRAM UPDATE:

Mr. Allen briefed the Welfare Board on child care programs at the last meeting. He explained since then, the Discretionary child care category is frozen, but the At-risk category was opened in December 2003 and the waiting list in this category is being addressed as quickly as possible.

Mr. Allen then reviewed the different policies adopted since the last Welfare Board meeting. Ms. Wilson asked about the funding situation. Mr. Allen replied funding for the Child Care Program has been better with some of the changes made and staff is projecting a surplus in this budget. This is the main reason the waiting lists are being addressed as quickly as possible. Ms. Ford clarified Child Care funding is still at the same level, but the policy changes made have saved enough funds to address the waiting lists. The Discretionary category will now be ranked so the most needy can get child care assistance first and move further down the list if funding is still available.

E.4. CREATION OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE UNIT:

Mr. Stagliano explained the Customer Service Unit (CSU) was created mainly due to the fact there are many new front-line positions in the division. The worker's phone lines have been re-routed to the office's clerical pool to answer calls. Currently, 80% of questions are answered during the initial call; 15% required worker intervention or information was given to the caseworker for follow-up; and, only 5% of the calls needed immediate worker intervention. The CSU was expanded after these statistics were released. There are now CSU locations in the Desert Inn Office and Central Office, using clerical staff to answer calls statewide, with the first available operator answering questions. CSU staff take lower level calls and handle them, leaving more time for caseworkers to work their cases.

When calls are made to an office's general number, the call is routed to the Voice Response Unit (VRU) and several choices are given to the caller via an automated system. Ms. Wilson asked if there is a way to opt out of the automation system. Mr. Stagliano replied callers can speak to a live person by backing up through the menus in the VRU and choosing to speak to a customer service representative. The VRU will also eliminate the number of repeat calls to caseworkers. All of the large offices and some of the smaller ones are currently included in the CSU call routing. In response to a question from Ms. Wilson, Ms. Ford stated each office has a different direct number. Mr. Stagliano said a caseworker's direct number is available but not generally given out due to the CSU being available with the option to speak to a customer service representative. There are 23 staff located at the Desert Inn Office in Las Vegas and five in Central Office in Carson City to answer questions.

E.5. BUDGET OVERVIEW:

Roger Mowbray, Deputy Administrator, presented an overview of the budget building process, starting with the foundation of the agency request, the Governor's recommended budget, through the legislative process. He also explained the eight different budget accounts the Welfare Division is responsible for; how the budget is balanced; key deadlines for the next biennium's budget; budget development roles of different agencies; decision unit definitions and what they are used for; the budget building ceiling amount of two times the fiscal year 2005 general fund amounts and how it calculates into the capped budget; items for special consideration over the cap; the different Welfare Division budget issues, and, the definition of a work program. Mr. Mowbray's presentation is available on request.

In response to a question from Ms. Wilson, Ms. Ford stated a paper is being published to show how and why caseload projections were high during the last legislative session. Mr. Mowbray explained Ms. Dufresne is working with a deputy fiscal analyst at the Legislative Counsel Bureau on updated projections and they will then provide the information to the 2005 Legislature.

E.6. DATA RELIABILITY AUDIT:

Jenelle Gimlin, Child Support Program Specialist, explained the intent of the data reliability audit (DRA) is to reward good performance or penalize poor performance for different child support collection categories. The audit, prepared by the state, must be accurate, complete and reliable. The federal government then audits about 200 cases and compare the audit information to the case files and processing timeframes. If the audit finds the data unreliable, the state's performance cannot be measured and incentives will not be paid.

Nevada received a penalty letter dated November 19, 2003, stating paternity establishment percentages for federal fiscal year 2002 were not met and the penalty is 1% of TANF Block Grant. Ms. Gimlin explained the penalty option taken by the state, and Nevada has filed an appeal in response to penalty. Ms. Gimlin explained the issues Nevada has in regard to the penalty letter which is addressed in the appeal. Staff is awaiting the response from the federal government on the appeal.

Ms. Wilson asked for expected response time on the federal government's response to Nevada's appeal. Ms. Ford explained their opposing brief was due to be filed by March 1 and they have requested an extension. She also mentioned 14 other states received a similar penalty and 13 of them have filed appeals. Leland Sullivan, Child Support Chief, stated Don Winne of the Attorney

General's Office, said he is expecting the federal government's opposing brief by March 5. He also explained the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) sent letters to states granting a technical waiver without states asking for it, then penalized the same states for errors in the timeframes the technical waiver covered. A discussion ensued regarding the amount of the penalty, where the penalty will be taken from and corrective actions.

F. WELFARE BOARD DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Ms. Zmaila opened floor to discussion for recommendations from the Board.

Ms. Banks-Weddle asked staff to follow through on advertising EAP on local community newspapers as quickly as possible. Ms. Ford explained the advertising is being done with the marketing agency and Las Vegas is being targeted first due to the upcoming cooling season.

Ms. Zmaila suggested Employment & Training job developers network more closely with community programs available, in particular smaller groups like apprenticeship programs, union programs, etc. Ms. Wyand stated there are already some procedures in place to work with different community agencies and meetings are scheduled with them to discuss different ways to assist welfare clients.

Ms. Zmaila also suggested, since Board members are easily reachable by the community, each office submit a very short synopsis of which community agencies they are working with to help clients. It will help the Board members clarify issues when people come to them with questions. A discussion ensued about what different offices do with community agencies. Ms. Zmaila asked a list of contacts at each office be made available to the Board members and Ms. Wyand suggested a list of the ZIP code breakdown by office be supplied to the Board. Ms. Zmaila asked for internal information which is already available. Ms. Wyand and the Board members agreed on their need for this information.

G. WELFARE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS:

No formal recommendations were made by the Board.

H. FUTURE MEETING DATE & POTENTIAL AGENDA ITEMS:

Ms. Ford asked if the Board members wanted to be polled for the next meeting date, they agreed and requested the next meeting date be set in approximately three months.

Ms. Demetras suggested the Board members be given information to help the Welfare Division with the next legislative session, so staff can begin laying groundwork to proceed accordingly.

Ms. Banks-Weddle commented two new power plants are being built in Ely and there is potential for creating many high-paying jobs. She asked if the Welfare Division could have conversations with these energy companies to get clients jobs at these new plants. As these types of things are announced, Ms. Banks-Weddle suggested using proactive approaches with new businesses to the area. Ms. Wyand asked if there is a City Council Redevelopment Team assisting low-income people obtain jobs. Reverend Richardson said there is and they can offer incentives to provide customized training if people are hired through these programs. In response to a question from Ms. Wilson, Reverend Richardson replied working with employers is already a role of the SNWIB and the SNWIB would like to work more closely with the Welfare Division to get recipients into jobs. Ms. Zmaila asked if the SNWIB has received feedback about people not being job-ready. Reverend Richardson said a market study is being sent to employers thinking about relocating to Nevada and the SNWIB will use it as a marketing tool to further customize training for these employers. Ms. Banks-Weddle stated lack of technical training is keeping some businesses out of southern Nevada and she has not seen training courses available for different types of technical jobs. Ms. Wyand commented classes at the Community College of Southern Nevada are being contracted for clients to update their basic job skills and the time worked at the welfare offices will also help clients gain experience with their basic job skills. Reverend Richardson added the focus of the SNWIB is not just to get people into a job, but for them to make a livable wage. He also commented if businesses decide to move to Nevada, they should be ones with higher paying jobs. Coordination has to be made for a long-term plan for individuals to stay in non-subsidized employment. A discussion followed regarding classes and training available to low-income and needy families through the Community College; training programs; SNWIB; and, other agencies.

I. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Willa Chaney, Smart Start Child Care Center, is still experiencing problems with EOB processing payment for people in the at-risk child care category and EOB locating the people on the waiting list. Her frustration level with EOB is high. She stated three people came to her this week alone asking for child care assistance. Ms. Chaney gave an example of three families who need help with child care. She said EOB is sending people to her center to help the low-income families with child care assistance and she cannot absorb costs not covered by the Child Care Program. She asked the Welfare Board to consider a measure to give a grant to the state to reimburse child care centers for caring for low-income children whose parents cannot afford to pay the entire cost. Ms. Wilson asked if child care referrals can be made to the SNWIB, as their eligibility criteria is not

the same EOB's. Ms. Chaney said the parents must participate in the SNWIB programs in order to be eligible for their child care assistance. Ms. Zmaila commented a program could be done similar to the one the military uses, she explained how the program works, the rewards available to those who put forth extra efforts in the program and how this type of program could help small businesses in low-income communities. Ms. Coy asked about one of Ms. Chaney's clients receiving a subsidy. Ms. Ford explained the difference between the foster care, Kinship Care and Non-needy Caretaker Programs. The Kinship and Non-needy Caretaker Programs must also meet the eligibility criteria for Child Care assistance. Ms. Chaney gave Mr. Allen the names of the parents and he said he will look into Ms. Chaney's concerns for these families. Ms. Zmaila asked if the child care subsidy paid is comparable to what child care centers charge. Mr. Stagliano explained how the child care subsidy payments are set, except for foster families and TANF recipients, for which the child care subsidy is paid in full. The subsidy pays 70% of what the providers are charging and if a family chooses a provider, who charges more than that amount, the family must cover the difference.

Connie Harris said EOB only paid her center \$13 per day for school-aged children, \$23 per day for infants, \$120 per week for toddlers. She then gave the rates at her center.

Ms. Banks-Weddle asked to hear a follow-up report from Mr. Allen on the three families Ms. Chaney requested help for at the next meeting to get an idea of what the disconnect between the providers and centers. Ms. Wilson agreed. Ms. Zmaila also suggested changing certain areas of the market survey to bring centers who are in low-income areas up to what other centers are being paid. Mr. Allen reminded the Board the at-risk category was just released to fill in December 2003, and it takes time to contact those on the list to update their information and get them on assistance.

Reverend Richardson said he has served on the EOB Board for about a year. The new Executive Director of EOB had intended to attend this meeting, but was unavailable. He has spoken to Mr. Allen and has formally requested the EOB Board have an open dialogue with the Welfare Division. He also apologized, if EOB had anything to do with caseload over-projections, and offered EOB's testimony during the 2005 Legislature, if it will help the division's get necessary funding. Reverend Richardson noted every state agency is listed on the SNWIB computer system. Currently, they are having problems with access to the state's computer system, but once this problem is taken care of, many people will be able to access many different services at one SNWIB location. Ms. Demetras asked if northern Nevada suffers the same sort of computer access problems or is it a system wide problem. Mr. Allen said it is a problem statewide, but it is being addressed.

Ms. Zmaila thanked those in attendance for coming and participating in the meeting. She adjourned the meeting at 2:07 p.m.



Kari Demetras
Welfare Board Chairperson



Date



Nancy K. Ford
Administrator



Date